REMARKS

In the Action, claims 1-20 were rejected under 35 USC §103 as being unpatentable over Tanaka (US 5,738,883) in view of Cyriax et al. (US 4,500,274) and further in view of Gellert (US 5,952,016). By this Amendment, all of the rejected claims have been withdrawn and a new set of claims, namely claims 21-37, substituted in their place. It is submitted that the inventions set forth in new claims 21-37 are not disclosed or suggested by any of the cited references, whether taken individually or in any permissible combination. In the new claims, claims 21-32 relate to method inventions, while claims 33-37 relate to systems inventions. In general, the present inventions relate to methods and systems that render easier access to hot passage distributor systems (HPDS) for maintenance, repair, and/or replacement. The HPDS can be exposed and repaired in the injection molding machine without removal of the mold or the HPDS. With traditional systems, it is difficult and time consuming to dismantle the components in order to access the HPDS, and most have to be physically removed from the injection molding machine for servicing.

In accordance with the new claims, one half of the mold (preferably the injection portion) is releasably connected to a mold plate by a plurality of bolts or other fasteners. The fasteners are only accessible from the cavity side of the mold portion. Also, the HPDS is releasably connected to a mold plate and has a plurality of nozzles which fit within bores in the mold portion. Once the fasteners are removed freeing the mold portion from the mold plate, the two halves of the mold are fastened together and moved in order to expose the HPDS and mold plate. At this point, the HPDS can be serviced as needed.

If further service or repair of the HPDS are needed, or if the HPDS needs to be replaced, a hook or other device can be attached to the mold plate and the two components can be removed from the injection molding (IM) machine with a crane or other mechanism. Once separated from the IM machine, the HPDS and mold can be separated and the HPDS serviced or replaced.

It is submitted that none of the cited references – or a combination of the teachings of the cited references – render the subject matter of claims 21-37 obvious under §103. Tanaka merely discloses a cassette molding system and does not teach the combination of a mold plate and an HPDS, or the manner in which an HPDS can be easily accessed and repaired. Cyriax et al. is merely directed to a quick-change mold assembly and does not disclose or suggest the present invention. Gellert is directed to an IM machine in which an HPDS which can be advanced without moving the mold from the molding machine.

None of the references, however, disclose or suggest an HPDS attached to a mold plate, and with one-half of the mold also connected to the mold plate. The references do not disclose or suggest disconnecting the mold portion from the mold plate by removal of bolts or other fasteners which are only accessible and removable from the mold cavity side of the mold halve.

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that all of the claims remaining in the case, namely claims 21-37, are in proper form and patentably distinguish from the prior art. Accordingly, allowance of these claims and passage of the application to issuance are respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

ARTZ & ARTZ

By:____________________
John A. Artz
Reg. No. 25,824
38525 Woodward Avenue, Suite 2000
West Bloomfield, MI 48304-5092
Phone: (248) 433-7200

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